



# West Region Special Investigation Division

## *The Insight*

"connecting law enforcement"

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At the Michigan Drug Endangered Children Training on August 1 and 2, the Michigan Drug Endangered Children (DEC) Response Protocol was unveiled. This protocol identifies steps that law enforcement, child protective services, and medical personnel must take to successfully intervene on behalf of the child. Additional information will be provided in this issue of the *Insight*.

Police officers are seizing a growing number of computers. The complexity of computer systems is also expanding with networks and servers becoming more common. When it becomes necessary to seize computer equipment, it is critical that certain steps be taken to minimize the risk of losing or altering data. Included in this issue of the *Insight* is information that will be useful if you are faced with the need to seize a computer system.

This issue of the *Insight* also profiles the Southwest Commercial Auto Recovery Unit (SCAR). During times of economic challenges and increased unemployment, many financial crimes, including auto theft, experience increases. The SCAR officers provide a wide range of services and expertise in the fight against auto theft.

The West Region Special Investigation Division now has an expanded and updated website where you will find additional information on the items covered in this issue of the *Insight*, as well as other information that we believe you will find useful. A link is provided for your use: [www.michigan.gov/WRSID](http://www.michigan.gov/WRSID)

Capt. Charles Bush

### Seizing Computer Equipment

With increasing regularity, patrol officers and investigators are finding electronic devices containing digital media. It is as important to protect the evidence contained within these devices as it is to protect any other type of evidence of criminal activity. The key to preserving this evidence is knowing how to protect it without destroying or altering it in any way. The following tips will help the investigator gather and protect electronic media.

Once the computer's role is understood and legal requirements are fulfilled:

- Immediately restrict access to the computer(s) and attached peripherals.
- Consider remote methods for access to computers. Suspects may be able to access and control the computer remotely using another computer, so timeliness may be an issue if you are dealing with multiple suspect(s).
- If the system appears to be used for business or consists of an elaborate setup (not a typical home system), call and speak with a computer forensic specialist.
- If a computer is "OFF", LEAVE IT OFF.
- Photograph screen (without camera flash).
- DO NOT BROWSE FILES IF THE SYSTEM IS ON!
- If a computer is "ON," document what is observed on the screen. If no running applications are observed, the plug can be pulled from the back of the computer. In most situations, the plug can be pulled on a typical home computer regardless of the applications running; however, in some instances data can be lost. Consult a forensic specialist if you have questions or concerns.
- When power is pulled, pull the plug from the back of the computer.
- If transporting is required, package components and transport/store components as fragile cargo.
- Document all connected peripherals such as mice, keyboards, monitors, etc.
- Collect peripherals that may store electronic data such as external hard drives, thumb drives, digital cameras, floppy disks, flash media, CD/DVDs, and some printers, etc.

Many times, business computers will be running operating systems that can be damaged if they are not shut down properly. These computers can usually be handled just as home computers, but a computer specialist should be contacted. A computer forensic specialist is someone who has received formalized training in electronic evidence collection and data recovery.

**WRSID Computer Crimes Unit – (517) 336-2010**  
**After hours – MSP Operations (517) 336-6605**

### Drug Endangered Children

Methamphetamine is a very dangerous and deadly drug. The manufacturing of meth produces a wide variety of contaminants that have profound effects on the health of people who are exposed to them and contaminates everything in a home from the walls and floors to the clothes and people who enter.

Michigan has worked diligently to develop initiatives aimed at methamphetamine enforcement, education, and prevention. One such initiative that has national, state, and local attention is the "Drug Endangered Children" initiative.

In January 2006, a committee comprised of representatives from the Departments of Community Health, Corrections, Human Services, and State Police, as well as the medical community, was tasked with identifying best practices and developing a uniform procedure for response and treatment of drug endangered children.

Michigan's first ever statewide "Drug Endangered Children" protocols have been developed to help protect our youngest victims found in these environments. Statewide training is being coordinated and will be announced when finalized. The DEC protocols can be viewed at [www.michigan.gov/meth](http://www.michigan.gov/meth)

### Southwest Commercial Auto Recovery (SCAR)

The Southwest Commercial Auto Recovery Unit (SCAR) is a multi-jurisdictional auto theft unit with investigators from the Berrien County Sheriff Department, Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety, Battle Creek Police Department, and the Michigan State Police. The SCAR unit began in 1988, with three investigators and was grant-funded through the Automobile Theft Prevention Authority (ATPA). ATPA is funded by an annual one-dollar assessment on each insured non-commercial passenger vehicle, plus interest earned by investing those funds. The purpose of the ATPA program is to combat auto theft in the state of Michigan and it continues to provide funding for SCAR and auto theft teams throughout the state.

Currently, the SCAR unit consists of five investigators, including a secretary for administrative support. The unit covers all of Southwest Michigan with primary focus in Van Buren, Kalamazoo, Calhoun, Berrien, Cass, and St. Joseph counties. SCAR's investigative priority is the identification of organized auto theft rings in their area, along with suspect arrests and the recovery of stolen motor vehicles. SCAR investigators initiate investigations, conduct undercover operations, identify stolen motor vehicles, provide training, and act as a resource for all police agencies in the area. SCAR's expertise also includes chop shop investigation, the identification of retagged motor vehicles, construction equipment theft/ID, and motorcycle identification, i.e., Harley Davidson.

In the past year, SCAR has seen an increase in the amount of "burns" they have investigated. Typically, a "burn" is a vehicle reported stolen by the owner that is discovered burned at another location. The vehicle then has to be identified through a confidential number and the incident investigated. A likely explanation for the increase is the current economic state coupled with the high price of gasoline. Many individuals have large sport utility vehicles that are not economical and carry large monthly payments. If an individual is in financial trouble, they may elect to have their vehicle "burned" and collect the insurance money.

SCAR has also investigated a large number of "retags," in which an individual obtains a vehicle and "retags" it with another public VIN. Most often these vehicles have been stolen and are being retagged with a different VIN so the vehicle can be sold with a valid title and a profit realized. Most often these vehicles are part of an organized theft ring operating a chop shop.

Another area that has increased in frequency is the theft of construction equipment. Construction equipment is not titled, is very easy to steal, and is not normally checked by patrol officers. It is not uncommon to see these construction pieces retagged with a fraudulent PIN (Product Identification Number) or the PIN tag completely removed from the construction piece.



**Scene of a chop shop investigation**

SCAR detectives can be contacted at (269) 657-3187.

Other auto theft units in Michigan are listed below.

<u>Agency</u>	<u>Contact Person</u>	<u>Telephone</u>	<u>Fax</u>
Genesee County Auto Theft	Lt. Randy Smith	810-655-8185	810-655-8058
Oakland County Auto Theft	Sgt. Kevin Banycky	248-858-5208	248-858-9565
Macomb County Auto Theft	Lt. John Michalke	586-469-6491	586-469-6844
MSP Scar Unit	D/Lt. Chuck Christensen	269-657-3187	269-657-7181
MSP Downriver Auto Theft	D/Lt. Ray Collins	734-479-4130	734-479-2371
MSP Monroe Auto Theft	D/Sgt. Jeff Hart	734-848-3445	734-848-3502
MSP Western Wayne Auto Theft	D/F/Lt. Edward Gerds	734-397-0090	734-397-1378
MSP Washtenaw Auto Theft	D/Sgt. George Warchock	734-994-8652	734-994-8657
Saginaw County Auto Theft	Det. Gary Fitzmaurice	989-759-1629	989-759-1525
Grand Rapids Auto Theft	Sgt. Stanley Lis	616-456-3338	616-456-3799

**1-866-METH-TIP**

**Cyber-tip hotline  
1-877-5CYBER3**

**Arson Tip Line  
1-800-44-ARSON**

**Identity Theft Hotline  
1-877-644-3843**

**HEMP Hotline  
1-800-235-HEMP**

**VISIT OUR NEW WEBSITE AT  
[www.michigan.gov/WRSID](http://www.michigan.gov/WRSID)**